



PRESS RELEASE

August 8, 2011

**Bozeman Public Schools
Office of the Superintendent
Kirk J. Miller, Ed.D.**

Topic: Enrollment growth spurs delay in notifying K-5 students of school and classroom placement.

Notifications of school and teacher placement for all K-5 students in the Bozeman Public School District have been postponed from the original August 12th date, and instead will be sent on August 22nd. Enrollment continues to grow, most specifically in the primary grades (K-2), and the District must balance state class size standards, the wishes of families to be placed in attendance area schools, budget shortfall, and facility and classroom space availability. Delaying notification provides the District with the greatest amount of flexibility to either add new classrooms or to provide paraprofessionals to serve as overflow aides.

“We are working very hard to balance fiscal responsibility to our taxpayers while remaining true to our attendance area placement procedure,” states Dr. Kirk Miller. “The balance is whether to add a new section in a school and move non-attendance area students to that school versus loading up a classroom so that the student teacher ratio increases. Neither is optimal.” So that parents are not given a notification of placement that must be rescinded in the event that we must open a classroom section in a different school, the District is postponing notification.

K-5 Enrollment: 2011-12

Elementary enrollment has increased approximately 9.5% between October 2, 2008 (2,427) and June 3, 2011 (2,657). Over 600 new K-5 students have registered since last spring, and this number continues to grow daily. Families have moved out of Bozeman over the summer as well, and we often don’t know who has done so until mid-September.

Miller states, “When it comes down to it, we acknowledge that numbers and formal procedures won’t make this any less frustrating to families who want the best for their children. Our experience tells us, children take their cues from their parents: a positive outlook while families wait for notification and then acceptance/understanding of the placement decision and healthy excitement and anticipation for that first day of school make the transition to a new school year successful. Our commitment to you is that each of our schools will provide a welcoming, healthy learning environment for your child to learn and grow.”

The table below shows the District's projected 2011-12 enrollment at each grade level as compared to the actual, or current, enrollment. Enrollment is projected using a Cohort Survival calculation, and projections have historically been very accurate. The changing economy may cause this year's projections to be less reliable.

	K	1	2	3	4	5	Total
Projected	470	448	471	471	456	420	2736
Actual	497	453	473	453	438	426	2729

The District is actively planning contingencies in the event that one or more sections of either kindergarten or first grade are needed. Because of attendance boundaries, some schools have full enrollment for their classroom sections and do not have the ability to add additional classrooms although classroom space is available in pockets across the District.

Bozeman is a desirable community to live and, while other districts across Montana are experiencing enrollment decreases, our numbers are significantly increasing every year, especially at the primary level (grades K-2). In 2008-09, Bozeman School District #7 implemented an attendance area enrollment and placement system. Although students were initially grandfathered into non-attendance area schools, the District anticipated increasing attendance area percentages as students who had been grandfathered were promoted to middle school. By October, 2010, the District posted an increase in students attending neighborhood schools by over 6% compared the previous year, and 16% since the neighborhood school concept began. The District also projected a decreasing ability to place students in attendance area schools as enrollment increased and classroom space became scarce.

"We acknowledge that delaying notification is frustrating to families who were planning to be able to share placement information with their children shortly after August 12th. We have worked hard to earn the trust and respect of our community as a District of integrity and hope to continue this by communicating our decisions in an honest and transparent way," states Miller.

Facts and Figures as of August 5, 2011:

- Four hundred ninety-seven (497) kindergartners have registered. Based on current class configurations, 428 will be able to be placed in their attendance area school (86%).
- Thirty-six (36) new 1st graders have registered. Based on current class configurations, 10 will be able to be placed in their attendance area school (28%).
- 15 new 2nd graders have registered. Based on current class configurations, all but two will be able to be placed in attendance area schools (87% in attendance area).
- 22 new 3rd graders have registered. Based on current class configurations, all but six will be able to be placed in attendance area schools (73% in attendance area).
- 17 new 4th graders have registered. Based on current class configurations, all but five will be able to be placed in attendance area schools (71% in attendance area).
- 21 new 5th graders have registered. Based on current class configurations, all but five will be able to be placed in attendance area schools (77% in attendance area).

- Those students ultimately not placed in attendance area schools will be placed on wait lists to attend their neighborhood school.
- Several students who were not grandfathered (only 4th and 5th graders remain grandfathered) will be moved to their attendance area school to make room for students in the attendance area.
- Several combined grade classes may be implemented across the district, in part, to optimize configurations in those schools based on student numbers.

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